

Discouragement, 1 Kings 19:1-4 – May 10th, 2015

- We're going to break from our expositional teaching through 1 Corinthians to do a topical teaching I've titled "Discouragement."
- This because, one of the most fascinating places we'll be visiting in Israel is Mt. Carmel, where Elijah was victorious over Baal.
- The reason it's such a fascinating place isn't so much because of what Elijah did, but what happened to Elijah after he did it.

- What I'm speaking of is Elijah's utter discouragement and despair after the miraculous victory of calling fire down from heaven.
- I'm presupposing that most of you know the story, but for those who don't, kindly allow me to take a moment to set the stage.
- It all started during the reign of a most wicked king of the Northern tribes of Israel named Ahab, along with his evil wife Jezebel.

- Because they had forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baal's, Elijah challenges Ahab to a contest.
- He is to gather all Israel on Mt. Carmel, with 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.
- Once there, they take bulls as a sacrifice on the altar and the prophets of Baal go first to call on their god to consume it with fire.

1 Kings 18:26-30 26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. 27 And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. 29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. 30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.

- Suffice it to say, when Elijah calls fire down it consumes the sacrifice instantly even though he pours four pots of water on it.
- Then, after this, he seizes the prophets of Baal, and has them brought down to the Brook Kishon and executes all 450 of them.
- You would think that after a victory of this magnitude, Elijah would rejoice, but instead, he runs for his life in fear of Jezebel.

1 Kings 19:1-4 1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." 3 And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"

- What happened to Elijah who prayed that rain "wouldn't" come down and here that fire "would" come down. Now he's down.
- Elijah is now running for his life, with a contract on his life, and we find him under a broom tree, praying God would take his life.
- I would suggest there are several reasons that the Elijah's of this world can become so discouraged after being so victorious.

1. Elijah's don't keep successes successfully (1 Kings 19:1)

- I suggest to you that on the heels of Elijah's miraculous victories he has become the most vulnerable to spiritual defeat.
- The Elijah's amongst us are the most susceptible to discouragement when we've experienced the grandest of spiritual success.
- It seems Satan knows this so he stalks us while he's roaming around like a lion waiting for this optimum time to devour us.

2. Elijah's don't keep their situation in perspective (1 Kings 19:2)

- Elijah loses perspective by exaggerating the threat when Jezebel sends them an email saying they'll be dead by the next day.
- One of the primary causes for discouragement, depression, and despair, is when we manufacture our worst-case scenario.
- To do this is to give the enemy too much power over our lives; thus, we end up forgetting Who's really the Lord of our lives.

3. Elijah's don't keep themselves in fellowship (1 Kings 19:3-4)

- We're told that when Elijah is running for his life, that he actually "leaves his servant behind," so he can be by himself.
- Of course there's going to be those times when we need to be alone to seek God, but that's not what Elijah is doing here.
- He's cutting himself off from anyone and everyone who could be of immeasurable help for him, and a blessing to him.

4. Elijah's don't keep their focus on the Lord (1 Kings 19:4)

- Elijah tells the Lord that he's "no better than his father's." At first, he seems self-deprecating, but actually he is self-focused.
- Apparently what Elijah wanted for himself was that he would be known for being better than his father's before him.
- While there's nothing wrong with wanting to be better, it is wrong when being better than others is what motivates us to do it.

5. Elijah's don't keep them self healthy physically (1 Kings 19:5-8)

- Elijah is physically fatigued, and emotionally exhausted. Doubtless, he's very sleep deprived and very unhealthy physically.
- He's so unhealthy that the Lord has to let him just eat and sleep so he will have enough strength for 40 days and nights.
- I don't think this one cure can be overstated and, if the truth be known, is understated in being a major cause of depression.

6. Elijah's don't keep their expectations in check (1 Kings 19:9-10)

- This is where Elijah goes into a cave and the Lord asks him what he's doing there. Elijah is clearly disenchanted with God.
- Elijah tells God that he's done what was expected of him but it seems God has not done what Elijah expected He would do. - Having expectations of what God will do, when He will do it, and even the way He should do it will sink us into despair.

7. Elijah's don't keep small windows open (1 Kings 19:11-14)

- God now has Elijah go out and stand on the mountain before Him then He passes by Elijah in a very dramatic way.
- First, it's a great strong wind, then, an earthquake, then after that, it's a fire, but the Lord didn't come in any of these.
- However, the Lord was in "a still small voice" asking Elijah the same exact question and Elijah gives the same exact answer.